THE LONGEST WAY ROUND.

A sign-post at the forked road
Of Time stood grim and gray,
And to the post a traveler strode,
In doubt which was the way.

One road led up the stony hill,
The other road led down:
The downward road to Luckyville,
And up, to Hardshiptown.

Toward Luckyville he set his face,
Yet, even as he turned,
A traveler coming from that place
His hopeful eyes discerned.

He waited till the other came
The steeper road to take.
"Is Luckyville," he said, "so tame
That you its joys forsake?"

"Not so," the stranger quick replied,
As up the hill he went.
"That sign was wrong: I know, who've tried
The rash experiment.

"I'm going up this stony hill.
Already I've been down,
And find the way to Luckyville
Is 'round through Hardshiptown."
—Life.

Sim Gage's Taj Mahal.

BY E. HOUGH.

The valley of the Red river of the north is really the bottom of an ancient sea, whose floor, flat as a table, 40 miles across from rim to rim, runs illimitably north and south, drained by a crooked, deep-cut thread of water.

Here and there a clump of trees, yellow-green against the yellow gray, may rise deprecatingly, but they are the trees of men, merely tolerated by the elements. Deep, rich grass and flowers and snow and savage cold were long the main products of this great wild garden of the north. Once the grass and flowers for hundreds of miles lay spread like a royal carpet; but now the carpet is made of hundreds of miles of wheat, fine and hard, such as no other land produces. Men of the old world and the new, from the north, the west and the east, swept out into this garden land that lay ready for the plow as soon as the Indians were driven away from it. The creak of the wooden-wheeled carts of the half-breed buffalo-hunters was replaced by the clank of the seeder and the rattle of the reaper.

Sim Gage's house, low and clinging hard to the earth with which it combated, stood far out in the middle of this broad prairie-ground, across which one might look for more than ten miles and see the big elevators of the nearest town.

There were no towns at all there 15 years before, when Sim Gage first turned up the bright black loom on his claim. Since then he had met the blizzards and beaten them and had endured the blazing heats of the swift summer seasons. The snow had not separated his grip from the land on which he had laid hold, and drought had not burned out his resolution.

His hair had thinned and grown gray, his face became browned and seamed with the weather, and perhaps his heart had hardened somewhat under the steady and relentless pressure of his life; but never had he slackened his hold or dreamed of giving up the fight with this iron-bound garden of the wheat. He had hardly lifted up his eyes.

At first it was bacon and bread that Sarah Gage, his wife, had cooked; then it was beef and bread. It began to be beef and bread and other things of late years, when Number One wheat had brought growing cities to the edge of the forgotten sea. But then Sarah Gage died. Poor woman! she should have been unhappy, no doubt, during her life, but she was not wise enough. The years broke her down, and the winds blew away her color and comeliness, but neither sun nor snow could dim her love, her cheerfulness or her faith. She loved her home, every inch of it, as it grew. She loved her husband, loved her daughter. All her dreams came true.

Six days she labored, and the seventh was the Lord's day. Twelve miles or more across the prairie each Sunday, although the icy poudre-cut or the sun scorched or the level ground swam with water, Sarah Gage rode or drove to church. Farther than that she would go to nurse the sick settler in his "shack" or care for the overworked woman who had dropped in the harness of the daily life.

How beautiful and noble is such a life as that of Sarah Gage! You may have eaten bread made of the Number One wheat she helped to raise, and the money you paid for it may have helped buy the hymn book that she loved and from which they chose the favorite hymn to sing above her grave; her grave in the bottom of the forgotten sea.

That was in the fall, when the air was growing sharp, although still the mid-day heat flamed up apace. The clear blue of the sky was flecked and lined with troops of white fowl. The stubble-fields were white with the great flocks of the snow-geese coming down from the north. In the morning long squads and armies of the big brown grouse, on rocking, rapid, intermittent wing, were passing down from the barren wastes of snow to regions where timber and corn-lands gave them a longer lease of life.

Only man remained behind in this forsaken land, to prove to the elements that he was master there. The grass passed into the seer and yellow leaf and was cut down by the frost, and snow blew above it to render it forgotten.

Sim Gage went back to the house and sat down in the black clothing worn alike for festival or mourning. His face was hard and emotionless, but his blue eyes looked out with pitiful and beseeching gaze. Emmy comforted him, as is the mission of womankind, though Emmy should still have been a girl.

All through the swift fall and the leaden-footed winter Emmy was at her father's side, doing for him all she could. From dark to dark she was always busy. The cattle at the barn needed her sometimes, and the silent clamoring of housekeeping never ceased its dull appeal. The Dakota home was as neat as any in England. By the fireside sat a figure suddenly grown old; but quietly, here, there, everywhere, moved the straight form of Emmy—a woman grown matured in her demeanor in less than 30 days, realizing the burden which had come to her, but ready to meet it with continuing courage. It was not alone the men who won the west. When the deep snows came and the bitter cold Emmy and her father bundled up in heavy wool and furs when they went about their outdoor work. At night, gathered close to the little stove, the two talked or read or oftentimes passed long hours in silence. Emmy had a few books and journals and now and then a picture. Perhaps it was as a premium from a weekly paper that she had obtained the picture she most prized, a photographic reproduction showing a fairy dream in architecture, a white palace of some unfamiliar but compelling design. Neither she nor her father knew the name of the original of the picture, but they called it Solomon Temple, having read of that and knowing of no better name.

So it might have passed had it not been for the Farmer's Encyclopedia. For one night Emmy, turning over the pages of this encyclopedia, saw there the blurred likeness of her temple.

"I've found it, pa!" she exclaimed.

"Found what, Emmy?" said the old man.

"My picture! It ain't Solomon's Temple. It's the—the Taj Mahal. Its all described right here in the book. It ain't really a temple at all. It's a mau-sole-yum. Listen here." She read aloud:

"The Taj Mahal of Agra, India, without doubt the most beautiful and renowned mau-sole-yum of the earth. This wondrous triumph of architectural skill was built by the sultan of India as a fitting tomb for the body of his beloved wife, the sultana, to whom he was much devoted. A royal treasure was expended in this noble monument, and even today kingly ransoms are visible in the precious stones displayed in the decoration of the tomb. The edifice is of solid white marble and is set in the middle of vast and beautiful gardens. The main building is surmounted by a lofty dome rising above the centre and flanked by four delicate minarets or towers. The interior is an infinitude of inlaid work and exquisite carvings in the marble. In the central chamber rests the sarco-phay-gus of the sultana, and near by it is that of the sultan, her husband, who built for her this royal tomb that the world might know his love for her."

Emmy laid down the book, with her finger between the pages and took up her long-prized picture.

"It cost more than the state capitol, pa," she said, "and it's ever so many hundred years old. I knew it was something all the time."

"Let me see it, Emmy," said the old man. He held it long in his hand, gazing at it as if to fix in his mind each line and light and shadow.

"Does it say anything about that there woman—who she was or what she looked like, Emmy?"

"No, pa, not as I can see. It's mostly about the mau-sole-yum."

"She must have been a toler'ble good-looking woman, I guess," said Sim Gage after a time. "And she must have been a good woman, too, or her husband wouldn't have set so much store by her. I allow he must have had money."

He said little more and soon bade his daughter good night. Emmy, left at the fireside, sat dreaming of what it would be to be so dearly loved as that. Her father, at 58, lay down to dream of what it had been thus to love.

One morning, many days after, Sim Gage pushed his chair back from the breakfast table and spoke out slowly and as if by deliberate and well-considered plan.

"Emmy," said he, "I loved your ma."

"Yes, pa, I know you did," said Emmy, quietly, "and she did you."

"Yes and she did me. Emmy, do you s'pose that there sultan ever loved his sultaness any more'n I did your ma or she did me?"

"Why, pa—"

"But he was a leetle bit better fixed to show it, I guess; that's about it, eh?"

"Maybe so, pa."

"Emmy, I'm gettin' kind of old and foolish, I expect. I never used to have dreams—I jus' slept. But last night I had a dream. I dreamt I saw that there sultaness woman all dressed in silks and diamonds, and that there woman said to me, so plain I heard it fair, 'Not the marble and the precious stones, but the flowers that perish, these are most fit for human monument.' Emmy, I heard it plain!"

Emmy was confused, and both sat silent for a time. The old man was first to speak again.

"Emmy," said he, "your ma must have a Taj Mahal! I loved her, and she loved me, and she earned it, dearie knows. We can't make it of diamonds, and we ain't got marble nor any fancy stones, but we can build a Taj Mahal. We'll dig a side-ditch from the big well and get water over to where your ma is; and we'll make a wall of these here niggerhead boulders, and we'll plant rosebushes at each corner, and—Emmy, do you know what I'm goin' to do?"

"Yes?"

"Well, now, do you know, your ma, I may say, never did have all the fresh fruit she wanted to eat, never after she come up here to live. We used to drive over 40 miles to Plum Creek to get a mess of wild plums, and some years that'd be about all the fruit we did get, too. Last year, when we begun to strike these artesians, I told your ma that before long we could begin to raise fruit for ourselves as soon as we got the hang of it, and nothing we ever did ever pleased her so much as that. And now she's gone. But do you know what I'm going to do? I'm goin' to keep a rosebush at each corner every summer, and I'm goin' to plant strawberries inside the wall, and I'm goin' to have a row of blackberry bushes outside. Your ma would like them things. It ain't much, but it ain't easy. And this is goin' to be your ma's Taj Mahal!"

The blue and white panorama of the icy winter swept on in its icy sameness, till at last spring drew on again. The snow here and there let through the color of the earth. The wild geese came streaming up from the south, and in each open water-hole the lean and weary wild ducks paused in their cont nental flight. The snow quite disappeared, and a fringe of green appeared along the ditch banks. The boom of the dancing grouse echoed far on the air in the mornings, and over the burned prairies stalked the bent-billed yellow curlews. In the air sounded mysteriously sweet the mellow note of the plover, answered below by the twitterings of the larks. The gurgle of water came, and the wind blew softer, and the green grew higher in the land.

Sim Gage was a bowed and aged man when he went his way into the fields this spring, but he made no complaint, and no one heard him openly bemoan the loss of the wife he had loved so dearly and who had stood by him so steadfastly in the fight which had won their home. Sim Gage hauled boulders from the fields to the spot where Sarah Gage lay sleeping with no monument to mark her resting place, and here he built with his own hands the four rude but enduring walls, high as his waist and laid of the heavy iron-like boulders, which neither frost nor sun nor rain nor snow could injure.

With care and pain he did the work, taking many days for it. Then, getting out his team and plow, he led from the great pool at the artesian well a little, slow stream of water to the spot where he required it. When all this was done he told Emmy that the time had come for her to aid him, and Emmy went out with the cuttings of the rosebushes which she had obtained, and these they planted with care about the walls of Sim Gage's Taj Mahal.

It was now late in May. Midsummer came, and the green of the land became yellow, pale and perishing. The rains forsook the region, and bitter drought claimed it for its own, even as the winter had done, but upon the flat and burning face of the parched valley-land shone always a thread of green, and upon this thread hung a jewel of, emerald, the miracle of the withered plains, all the flowers of which were gone.

And although winter came again and drenching spring and burning summer, such was the care of these two souls who framed this wonder that the green here remained imperishable and soon was added to by many flowers, and fruit hung over the wall and fell ungathered upon the mound within.

"Emmy, girl," said Sim Gage one day, as if taking up a topic which had just been dropped, "Emmy, about that Taj Mahal, it seems to me it's accordin' to our lights. I don't begrudge the sultan his Taj Mahal, the one he built for his sultaness, but mine is good enough for me."

"And," he added some moments later, as if he had not paused, "no matter how good and perty she may have been—and I don't deny she was all that—I guess she wasn't any pertier'n your ma, nor any better a woman, nor any harder-workin' a wife, nor any faithfuller. God bless 'em both, Emmy, the sultaness that he loved and your ma that I loved, too!"—Youth's Companion.

TRAPS FOR KLONDIKERS.

THE TRAILS TO THE GOLD MINES SWARM WITH SWINDLERS.

Ingenious Snares That the Sure-Thing Gamblers Set for the Unwary—A Spell-binder Who Carries a Bogus Pack—The Shell Game—Salted Mines.

Since the grass has begun to grow too short for them in town, some of the confidence workers who still remain at Skagway, Alaska, have taken to the trails, where they continue to set snares for the dollars of unwary Klondikers. On the Skagway trail the sure-thing gambler seldom goes higher than the foot of White Pass summit. Half a dozen or so of the tribe usually travel together, sharing at the close of the day the profits of the tricks they have turned. One of the party is chosen as active operator. His necessary qualifications are a capacity to judge human character and a tongue that is gifted with glibness.

The successful confidence operator is best described by the term spell-binder. His confederates—the steerers—carefully disassociate themselves from him whenever a possible victim is in sight. The better to disguise his wolfish character the steerer frequently dons the sheep's clothing of a packer. It is no uncommon incident on the trail to see two or more notorious bunco steerers faring along, one after the other, apparently heavily burdened with packs which, if analyzed, would prove to be nothing more than straw or chips in canvas sacks. A little ahead of them always is the operator, equipped with a small portable table, three shells and the elusive pea.

When the first one reaches the manipulator of the ancient, but to the victim ever new, game, he stops, watches and listens, and finally lays down his pack as if to rest and be amused. Steerer No. 2 follows his example, as do the others in turn. By the time the prospective victim arrives he finds a spurious Klondiker just winning a bet from the shell game player amid the half-envious congratulations of his confederates.

"Well, well, this is my unlucky day," says the man with the table, "but I'll give some other gentleman a chance to win with the little pea."

Back and forth and round about go the little shells again, a glimpse of the pea being given the watchers at seductively frequent intervals. Another steerer guesses its location and wins a greenback or two.

"If you fellows are hitting me too hard," dubiously comments the operator, "I must size up my roll before taking any more bets."

He opens a well-lined pocketbook, and, while his attention is taken up with its contents, one of the steerers slyly raises the shell under which the pea is hidden. That catches the outsider, unless he be invulnerable against the temptations of bunco.

Laying his finger on the shell indicated to him, he offers to bet $10, $20, $50, or a higher sum that it covers the pea. His bet is taken, the shell is lifted, and the pea proves to be somewhere else. Usually the victim makes a second, and perhaps a third, bet in the hope of retrieving his loss, always with the same result. A witness to one of these episodes tells of having seen a prospector who had lost $90 sit upon his pack and burst into tears. He said that his last dollar had gone on the game.

Still higher up the trail that same day a man who runs a tent restaurant bet and lost $20, but the shell-game player was glad to disgorge it when the victim's wife, a 200-pound lady of German nativity, seized him by the coat collar and screamed lustily for help.

A woman who said she was going to the Klondike in the interests of the Smithsonian Institution complained to Captain L. A. Matile that confidence workers were so annoying her that she feared to continue the journey. She is traveling alone, and had called at the regular army encampment on her way out of town. Captain Matile, who commands the troops at Skagway, sent an escort of two soldiers with her as far as the Northwest Mounted Police post at Summit lake. After working one point on the trail thoroughly, the confidence men scatter, to reappear at another point under like circumstances some time later in the day.

On the Skagway trail the shell game is not in operation regularly. The men engaged at it are supposed to be a detachment of "Soapy" Smith's gamblers. Those who operate in Dyea, Sheep Camp and along to the base of Chilkoot are under the leadership of Tom Cady, a notorious Colorado camp confidence man.

Other devices for catching victims besides the pea and shells are heard of occasionally. The salted mine man is one of the most recent additions to those who seek to get something for nothing.

J. T. Jones, president of the Guarantee Title and Abstract company of Juneau, saved a Dyea merchant from falling into the clutches of a swindler of this variety. The merchant told Jones that he had a chance to buy a placer mine for the very low sum of $500. It was a new strike, only five miles outside of Dyea, and the locator, being out of funds, was willing to sacrifice his claim. He exhibited specimens of gold from the placer, they being shot and smaller particles. In the afternoon the miner accompanied Jones and the merchant to his claim. There he panned samples of the dirt.

The specimens obtained looked genuine, but, being dubious, the Juneau man had them tested. They proved to be a composition of copper, zinc, bismuth and tin. This evening Jones expressed the opinion that more than one local dealer in gold had made purchases of the bogus precious metal.

As United States Deputy Marshal Cudihee is now the sole guardian of the peace for Skagway and Dyea, it is almost impossible to keep the sure-thing gamblers and others of their ilk off the trails, however they may fare in the towns.—New York Sun.

"YANKEE TARS."

Surprised Old English Salts—Navies Could Meet on American Lakes.

One of the first productions the American republic was proud of was the American sailor, or, as he was affectionately called, the "Yankee tar." It was a very small navy that was set afloat by the revolted colonies in the revolution to contend with the greatest naval power in the world, but it made a great record for sailing and fighting. Our navy has already written a brave story on the pages of our history. In face of our own declarations to the contrary, we have always when the emergency came, had ready within the necessary period the ships and the sailors. It has been our habit for a very long time to assert our inferiority, but there has always been a stanch craft to carry the American flag to any point of the earth's surface where honor or duty required it to go, and to keep it flying in honor after it got there.

The United States has a great inland population, dwelling remote from the ocean and its commerce and its life, but the American is never a landlubber. He takes to the sea on occasion, wherever he may have been reared, just as in war times he shows a genius for the artillery. In his country there are lakes on which navies may perform their evolutions, and rivers where steam fleets may meet. On lake Champlain the Yankee tar kept up a fire which old English sailors said they had seen equalled only in Nelson's great fight at Copenhagen.

It has been the popular belief that our sailors were recruited from foreign countries, that the Yankee tar, strictly speaking, did not exist, but this is one of the numerous mistakes we have made about ourselves. It was in 1890 that the nativity of the sailors of the American navy was enrolled. In April of that year 53 per cent. of the whole enlisted force—7516 men and apprentices—were described as American citizens. In 1896 Secretary Herbert reported that 72 per cent. of the enlisted men were American citizens and 82 per cent. of the apprentices were natives of the United States.

From these figures it will be seen that the American navy is more American than it ever was before. The future navy is to be officered and manned from the apprentices who are natives of our soil. Every American sailor is the inheritor of glorious traditions. Every generation of American sailors has proved worthy of its predecessors.—Kansas City Star.

Two Youthful Patriots.

Two street gamins of Philadelphia agreed to settle the vexed question between Spain and the United States by a fistic encounter. One, an inoffensive, dirty little fellow, aged 10, agreed to represent Weyler, while Consul-General Lee was a shock-headed youth, a trifle dirtier and a trifle older. In the first round the unfortunate consul-general's foot slipped and he went down, with Weyler on top. He commenced to pummel him well, but in a moment a dozen gamins, who had agreed to see fair play, rushed at the successful representative of Spain, and so overwhelmed poor Weyler that it required the united efforts of three gentlemen who were passing by to pull enough of the enraged American citizens off to see the tyrant's legs. When the hero of the trocha was finally rescued he said: "You see, I hain't no Spain-yard, 'cause I'se not, but dem blokes who got me to play Weyler jess forgot who I wuz when I got Gineral Lee down."—Philadelphia Record.

Experiments With Nicotine.

Professor J. U. Lloyd has made a thorough study of the effect of nicotine on insects (the professor does not smoke), and has devised methods for extracting and using it as a parasiticide in sheep dips, plant sprays, etc. He has sold his right to an Eastern company on a royalty basis, and this company, which has now been operating for some two years in Chicago, has now arranged for the erection of a large factory in St. Louis.—American Druggist.

Poems of Passion.

He—I thought you said your friend was a passion poetess. I find her productions well balanced and strong in common sense.

She—But you should see her fly into a passion when she can't make her words fit the metre.—Detroit Free Press.